

MYKOLA YAROSCHENKO

(1846, Poltava, Ukraine / the Russian Empire — 1898, Kislovodsk, Russia / the Russian Empire)

Mykola Yaroshenko was born and grew up in the city of Poltava. He decided on a military career, swore allegiance to the Russian Empire and rose to the rank of Major general. His artistic talent also flourished in St. Petersburg, where he gained recognition as both a painter and one of the most active participants of the socially critical Peredvizhniki (the Wanderers, or members of the Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions).

During this period of particularly cruel restrictions of everything pertaining to Ukraine, the Russian art scene almost completely absorbed the talented and ambitious Yaroshenko. However, his love for Ukraine had an effect on the artist's creative work.

Yaroshenko had no professional artistic education. He was a non-matriculated student of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. He was mostly famous for realistic sensitive portraits and his social themes. When the issue of education for women was strongly opposed by the Russian society, Yaroshenko was the first to depict a woman student who attended the Higher Courses for Women. His painting *A Lady Student* was presented at the 11th exhibition of the Peredvizhniki and gave rise to heated gender discussions.

The artist would often visit Kyiv and his native city of Poltava. There, he found inspiration for his pictorial creations: he painted genre scenes, made landscape, and urban sketches. The duality of his identity between Russia and Ukraine is the reason for the posthumous return of his works to Ukraine. In 1917, his wife Maria bequeathed his artistic heritage and their big art collection to his birthplace Poltava. This became the foundation of the Poltava Art Museum.

ILLIA REPIN

(1844, Chuhuiv, Ukraine / the Russian Empire — 1930, Kuokkala, Russia / Finland)

Illia Repin, an acknowledged portrait painter and master of genre and history painting, focused his creative activity on depicting Ukrainian and Russian worlds in different tonalities and plots. He presented life in Russia mostly critically, focusing on hardship in the life of ordinary Russian people or on the Empire's belligerent history. He admired Ukrainian Cossacks and dedicated many works to them. "No one in the whole world appreciated liberty, equality and fraternity as strongly as they did!" — Repin wrote in a letter to the art critic Vladimir Stasov. He presented Ukraine's landscapes and everyday life in a bright, poetical way.

Repin descended from a Ukrainian Cossack family. He attended Chuhuiv's local topography school and an icon-painting workshop. Additionally, he earned money by painting the local churches.

In 1863, Repin began his education at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. He graduated in 1871 with distinction. He was one of the founders of the Society for Travelling Art Exhibitions (Peredvizhniki). He lived in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Vitebsk and taught at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts.

He often visited his native town Chuhuiv and took every opportunity to travel throughout the Ukraine. He spent months, sometimes years at a time in Europe. Repin spent the last 30 years of his life in Finland. Still, he maintained a strong connection with Ukraine, calling a hill on the premises of his estate the Penates of Chuhuiv.

WOLODYMIR BOROWYKOWSKY

(1757, Myrhorod, Ukraine / the Russian Empire — 1825, St. Petersburg, Russia / the Russian Empire)

Borovykovsky descended from an old Cossack family. In his young days, he served in the Myrhorod Cossack Regiment. His father taught him painting and Volodymyr raised to fame as an icon and portrait painter. He spent the first half of his life in Ukraine and developed his style under the influence of the Ukrainian Baroque, traditional folk portraits and Western European trends. Borovykovsky moved to St. Petersburg in 1788, after the Russian Empire had abolished Ukrainian autonomy by disbanding all Cossack regiments. In St. Petersburg the artist continued his development in the studio of the Ukrainian painter Dmytro Levytsky and the Austrian-Italian painter Johann Baptist von Lampi the Elder. Borovykovsky was famous as one of the best portrait painters in the Russian Empire. These later, idealizing paintings are made in the manner of Sentimentalism.

DAWYD BURLJUK

(1882, Semyrotivka, Ukraine / the Russian Empire — 1967, New York, USA)

“Ukraine has a most faithful son in my person,” Davyd Burliuk once asserted proudly. His paintings and drawings are rich in Ukrainian mythological symbols and figures. The artist, a descendant of scribes in the Zaporizhian Cossack Free Army, often depicted Cossacks and was fond of painting swift horses. He even referred to himself as “the poet of young mares”.

The artist’s burlesque manner, avant-garde stylistics and color schemes developed under the influence of the Ukrainian folklore and Cossack Baroque. Burliuk got his education at Schools of Fine Arts in Kazan and Odesa as well as in Munich and Paris. Until the late 1910s, he took an active part in Ukraine’s artistic life and was of a great influence on the formation of Ukrainian avant-garde trends.

In 1912, Burliuk and the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky published the futurist manifesto *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*. This episode made Burliuk widely known as the father of Russian Futurism. He brought this new artistic movement to Germany, where he participated in exhibitions of *Der Blaue Reiter*. In 1920, Burliuk went to Japan. In 1922, he emigrated to the United States, where he lived and painted for 45 years. In 1962, he wrote to the Kyiv State Museum of Ukrainian Art asking to arrange an exhibition of his oeuvre, but the Soviet ministry of culture prevented this project from happening.

OLEKSANDR TYSCHLER

(1898, Melitopol, Ukraine / Russisches Kaiserreich — 1980, Moskau, Russland / UdSSR)

Makhnovshchyna (Huliaipole), 1927

Tyschler was born into a Jewish carpenter family in Melitopol. He studied at the Kyiv Art School and with avant-garde artist Oleksandra Ekster from 1912 onwards. Initially he was interested in abstract painting, futurism and expressionism.

In 1919, Tyschler joined the Red Army and designed agitation posters. In 1921, he studied at Vkhutemas (Higher Artistic-Technical Workshops), then a stronghold of the avant-garde. Tyschler became known as a painter and book illustrator, but worked mainly as a designer of theater sets (for example, at the State Jewish Theaters in Minsk and Kharkiv, or the Roman Theater in Moscow).

This painting from 1927 initially entered the collection of the Kyiv Art Gallery in 1930 without a title. Only there it was given the name by which it is still known today. It is also the name of a popular anarchist movement that controlled large parts of Ukraine between 1917 and 1921 and was in constant contest about territorial dominance with other political powers and militarized groups. The leader, anarchist Nestor Machno (1888–1934), came from Huljapolje in Ukraine. Popular among peasants in this area, he was notorious elsewhere for his brutality. However, many legends surround this figure. Horse-drawn carts, often equipped with a machine gun, were a popular means of transportation. Tyschler dedicated several works to Machno.